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US Senate agrees debate landmark gun bill

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US Senate voted yesterday to debate the most ambitious gun safety legislation in nearly two decades, after a bipartisan group of lawmakers agreed on expanding background checks for firearm sales.

With relatives of the 20 children killed in the Newtown massacre watching from the visitors' galleries, lawmakers overcame Republican obstruction and overturned years of Senate refusal to address the nation's gun laws.

The move, which included 16 Republicans who joined Democrats in voting to proceed, sets up crucial votes next week on amendments to the bill, which also stiffens penalties for gun trafficking and boosts school safety.

"The hard work starts now," Majority Leader Harry Reid told his colleagues moments after the 68-31 vote.

White House spokesman Jay Carney relayed the administration's encouragement of the "bipartisan progress" on display in the Senate.

But he stressed yesterday's vote was just the "first stage in an effort to get sensible, com-

mon-sense legislation that would reduce gun violence in America while protecting Americans' Second Amendment rights."

President Barack Obama, who has leaned heavily on Congress to adopt his proposed steps to reduce gun violence in the aftermath of Newtown, meanwhile called families of the Sandy Hook school shooting victims to congratulate them on the vote result and pledge his continued support in the fight.

Jillian Soto, sister of slain Newtown first-grade teacher Victoria Soto and who spent days pressing lawmakers on Capitol Hill to enact tighter gun laws, fought back tears yesterday ahead of the vote.

She told reporters that while she had hoped for a tougher background check amendment, "I'm happy that we are getting somewhere."

The crucial ingredient in the complex gun control recipe is undoubtedly the compromise on background checks reached by Democrat Joe Manchin and Republican Pat Toomey.

Continued on page 6

It's official: The tram is running

Aruba's Prime Minister Mike Eman joined Minister of Tourism, Transport and Labor, Otmar Oduber and the Minister of Infrastructure, Integration and Environment, Benny Sevinger at the entrance to the cruise terminal in Oranjestad to personally welcome the first tourists to enjoy a ride on the Oranjestad tram.

The solar-powered tram, which uses no fossil fuel and produces no carbon emission, departed its main station in front of the cruise terminal yesterday morning, to take island visitors to a number of locations along Oranjestad's main commercial street, Caya G.F. "Betico" Croes. The tram is modified with a hydraulic lift to accommodate wheelchairs and the disabled.

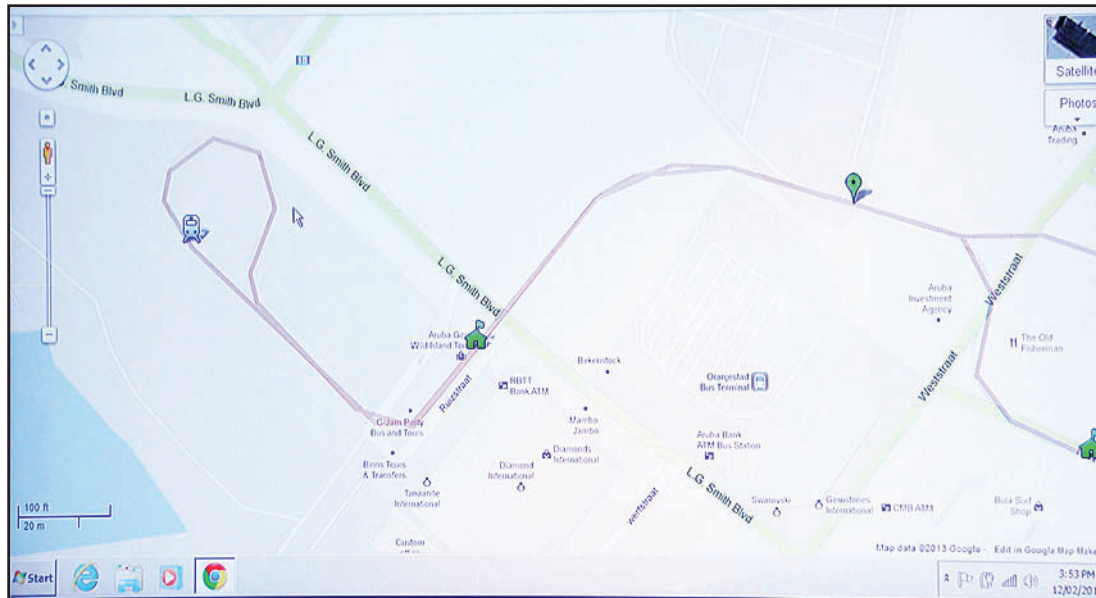
Stops along the way will be in Rancho, by the ARINA Building behind the bus station, Plaza Museo, adjacent to Fort Zoutman, Plaza Chipe Chipe, in front of La Moderna store, the water tower, Plaza Nicky, by the CMB Bank, Seaport Mall and Royal Plaza Mall.

"It may have been a long time coming," observed one local bystander, as the conductor clanged the trolley bell to signal they were underway, "but I have to admit, it looks mighty impressive."

Continued on page 2



Prime Minister Eman welcomes cruisehip passengers accompanied by Minister Sevinger (l), Minister Oduber (r) and Mrs. Tjin Asjoe-Croes



Map of route

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Comedy tonight! Don't miss out on a super show



Chuck Nice

Island entertainment has been seriously lacking a quality show, but New York comedian Ray Ellin is doing his utmost to fill this void, and succeeding admirably. Ray discovered Aruba during a vacation in early 2012 and it has become a second home for him, as he returned to spend a week or more on a nearly monthly basis over the past year. His enthusiasm for Aruba, its various amenities, and "sincerely hospitable people" earned him the nickname of "Aruba Ray" among his comedic colleagues in the States, and overwhelming in-

terest to appear when he decided to put together a comedy revue on Aruba.

It premiered on Wednesday evening, April 10 to a packed house in the Westin Resort's Cabaret Royale, an utterly perfect venue for this kind of intimate, engaging show. Ray demonstrated a deft intellect and talent for improvisation involving his audience, laying a firm and funny groundwork for his fellow comedians Chuck Nice and Brian Scott McFadden. They took up the baton very nicely, keeping the laughs coming for a full 90 minutes. All three are

it shows. Unquestionably, Aruba has, in three decades, never seen this degree of comedy talent performing on a nightly basis.

The humor is definitely for mature audiences, and as one of the audience stated, "I was literally falling off my chair; I can't remember the last time I laughed so hard." The three covered a range of topics that struck home on a universal level for the extremely mixed audience. Islanders and visitors from all parts of the U.S. were immensely entertained.

We don't want to put any spoilers here, but the show is



The audience was in stitches.

veteran performers on radio, TV, in commercials and New York City comedy clubs, and



Brian Scott McFadden, Chuck Nice, Ray Ellin

highly recommended if you like to laugh. This pilot project will continue through Tuesday evening, April 16, with the hope that it will prove popular enough to merit a one-year run with a steadily changing program of top comics from the U.S. Tickets are \$39, which convert into \$40 match play coupons for the casino in the Westin, once the show is over.

Tickets are available at the concierge desk in the Westin Aruba Resort in Palm Beach.

Rosalie Klein

It's official: The tram is running

Continued from page 1



Cruise ship passengers enjoy a ride on the tram

Prime Minister Eman congratulated both Minister Oduber and Minister Sevinger on the completion of this collaborative project, expressing his certainty it will enhance a visit to Oranjestad for vacationers and residents alike. He also had praise for CEO of the Aruba Tourism Authority, (ATA) Ronella Tjin

Asjoe-Croes, upon the tally and release of the latest tourism numbers for March, 2013 and the first quarter of the year. Both show steady growth over last year, and encouraging statistics for the island's economy.

Rosalie Klein

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Marvin and Sue Weber from Marvelous Travel visit Aruba



Recently, Aruba received the visit of Mr. Marvin and Mrs. Sue Weber, travel agents and owners of Marvelous Travel from Philadelphia, for a familiarization trip. The couple have been to Aruba before, but came back to familiarize with all what Aruba has to offer, the resorts, restaurants, all the new tourism projects and excursions, and the enhancement of our infrastructure in Oranjestad and other districts.

Mr. Weber was recently selected by Travel Impressions to be their Ambassador to

Aruba. His first job was to energize local marketing of vacations to Aruba so he worked at the Aruba tourism booth at the Inquirer Tradeshaw on the weekend of January 26 & 27, 2013. His second task was to return to the island.

The Webers expressed to be very satisfied with all the improvements that the island is going through and they expect to increase the volume of visitors to Aruba, looking for a great vacation.

Mr. Ernest Giel from the



Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mr. Marv Weber himself, made a nice program for this Fam Trip that covered every aspect of what needs to be seen on the island.

Aruba Tourism Authority hereby would like to thank W-Marv and Sue Weber for the great job they are doing in the USA, promoting and selling our beautiful island as the greatest destination.

Team Aruba continues to popularize the 'Happy Island'

UNION, S.C.: The Extreme Pro Stock Team from Aruba has a rather unique purpose among drag racing. While being successful on track is certainly among their top goals, the team also exists for

another reason - to promote their paradise home island. Fans who walk by their pits are immediately drawn by the view of bright colors of the Aruba.com Mustang and hauler and surrounding is-

land-themed decor.

The team self, a true reflection of the 'happy island', also pique the interests of racers and fans alike. And a quick tour of the Team's Facebook or Twitter pages will quickly have one longing for Aruba's white beaches and tropical breeze. Any interaction with this Team is sure to draw interest in an Aruba vacation.

Already many racers and fans have visited Aruba thru the recommendation of the Eman family and Team Aruba, including Pro Mod legend Harold Martin and former Pro Stock World Champions. Most recently Brud Benecke, crew member for John Pluchino, ventured to Aruba for an island getaway. He spoke enthusiastically about his trip.

Continued on page 5

Aruba's banking sector is healthy and strong

ORANJESTAD -- Aruba is a privileged island. In many countries around the world, the government has had to intervene to keep the bank industry surviving, while in Aruba our financial sector is moving ahead amidst the crisis in the world, and that without assistance from the government.

A look back at January 1988.

Aruba stood at the beginning of an economic explosion. The government decided to make tourism the focus of its economy. Worldwide tourism was growing and the white sand beaches of Aruba needed no promotion. Investors stood in line to invest in different hotel projects.

Together with the private sector, the government decided to launch the Aruba Investment Bank (AIB) to help guide the ambitions in the desired direction. In reality, AIB was the very first public-private association on Aruba, according to its director Frensel Giel. In the first years of her existence, AIB concentrated heavily on investments. Thereafter this changed as the local commercial banks had sufficiently cash money to take over that role.

Soon AIB took on a new



Frensel Giel

role, the management of projects. Today AIB, as an investment bank, offers a wide scale of services in the financial economic and in management field.

According to Giel, "we can be compared to a hybrid. From every angle we have an advisory role in the responsible development of this lovely island. On the other hand, we have a concrete function to put projects into motion." Companies can still knock on AIB's doors for credit. They evaluate first of all if they have a good plan which fits into the context of Aruba.

Continued on page 5

Aruba Airlines spreading its wings



Aruba Airlines, the newest kid on the block was recently caught taking a spin in preparation of the official launching pretty soon. Aruba Airlines flies modern advanced Airbus A320 aircraft. These aircraft are powered by reliable and efficient IAE engines to reduce fuel consumption.

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Interesting Crime Seminar

By **dr. Nathalie Kingsale (psychiatrist)** and **dr. Tony Green (psychologist)**



dr. Tony Green

Criminalidad a bira un preocupacion masha grandi pa e comunidad Arubano den ultimo temponan, y ta parce cu no tin solucion. E situacion ta parce di ta empeorando dia pa dia.

Ta den e cuadro aki, Psiciatra, Dr. Nathalie Kingsale y Psicologo, Dr. Tony Green a tuma e decision pa den un team, organisa un seminario pa trata na accentua riba e problema aki den un forma structura.

Ambos, Kingsale y Green ta profesionalnan cu frecuentemente ta atende cu personanan cu di un manera of otro a wordo afecta door di un of otro acto di agresividad of abuso cometi na nan door di malechornan den nos comunidad. Hopi bez, e trauma cu e victimanan ta keda cu ne ta simplemente increibel.

Nathalie Kingsale, despues di a traha como Psiciatra na Hulanda pa varios aña, awor ta un di e specialistanan na PAAZ, y ta dedica na yuda trece un cambio den e situacion penoso di criminalidad aki na Aruba, su pais natal.

Den e seminario aki, Kingsale lo enfoca ariba e diferente motibonan pa criminalidad den un comunidad, e lo señala especificamente 7 motibonan clave.

Mientras, e Psicologo Tony Green lo enfoca ariba e diferente pasonan specifico cu nos lo por tuma pa combati e fenomeno di criminalidad azotando nos comunidad awe. Green lo indica den un forma hopi practico y concreto e 7 pasonan cu nos por tuma pa frena e problema aki.

Por medio di un presentacion di PowerPoint, ambos profesional lo ilustra nan puntonan visualmente pa asina e audiencia lo por sigui cu e presentacion den un forma hopi dinamico y efectivo. Dr. Kingsale ta un tremendo orador y aunke basta recien bek na Aruba ya caba ta den demanda na diferente lugarnan pa dunamento di charlanan. Tony Green ta conoci pa su forma energetico, chistoso y dinamico y tin un reputacion di ta un tremendo orador. Green keto bay ta den demanda pa su seminaronan localmente y den exterior.

E seminario riba Criminalidad aki ta priminti di ta algo sumamente interesante y relevante, sigur loke Aruba tin mester di dje net awor aki. Nan lo habri nos wowonan den un manera cu nos nunca lo a pensa...bo no por afford di perde esaki. E ta tuma lugar riba un Diamars anochi dia **23 di April** pa **7:00 or** den **Cas Di Cultura**. Busca bo ticket trempa pa por garantiza bo lugar, pasobra tickets ta limita.

Desde diabierna awor, tickets ta obtenibel na e siguiente lugarnan favorito: Botica Santa Anna na Noord, Valero Santa Cruz, Valero Essoville na San Nicolas, y na El Gallo Rojo na San Nicolas.

Esaki por ta e seminario cu Aruba tabata sperando pa trece un cambio berdadero den e situacion penoso di criminalidad na Aruba!

Introducing "Miss Aruba Foundation"

"Miss Aruba Foundation" is ready to bring a serious pageant on a high level, where the contestants for Srta. Aruba will be very well prepared, which will be a good start for their future career in the community.

Why the name Srta. Aruba?

Srta. Aruba means (Miss Aruba); thus promoting our national language Papiamentu.

Srta. Aruba will be more than a beauty Pageant. The foundation, with the cooperation of sponsors will provide, among others, seminar of the history of our Aruba.

The participants will also receive lessons in motivation; awareness –prevention; etiquette and protocol; charity work in the district; vision of our government; public speaking; exercise; hair blowing; make up and modeling. All participants, regardless of social standard, will be prepared on the same level for this pageant.

The foundation's goal is for the Srta. Aruba winner and Miss Teen Aruba sister to participate in planting of a tree symbol of promise; work with the community; visit every district on the island and see their needs with the help of our local Minister and to raise funds for local and international foundations and organizations

This year's ... is to work with the HIV foundation to instill awareness/prevention to the youth by doing seminars and presenting folders at the local school. The foundation will work together with the Clown Dokters, visiting the children at the Hospital, reading books and doing activities with them.

The Srta. Aruba pageant will be on July 13, 2013; the winner will represent Aruba at the Miss International pageant in Japan.

Aruba's Prime Minister Mike Eman finds the idea of the Miss Aruba Foundation very great and is giving all his



Aruba Prime Minister Eman with Miss Aruba Foundation member Isai Labadie

support to this organization.

Donation are welcome.

For more information please contact the foundation

at Tel: 297-5971221 or 297-7425713 or e-mail: mis-sarubafoundation@live.com

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Esaki ta un bon ora pa ruim op!

Team Aruba continues...

Continued from page 3



"Over the last three years I've become really good friends with Team Aruba. They kept encouraging me to come down to Aruba, so finally I decided to take my fiancée there on vacation. It was truly one of the best trips we've ever had. Everyone on the island was very accommodating and nice. Ven Eman went out of his way to show us around. We had a wonderful time and will certainly do it again. Our hotel accommodations were great. It was a peaceful vacation. We didn't have to worry about rain. Out of all the places I've been Aruba was the most accommodating and certainly a favorite. The only reason I went was because of Team Aruba, but now I will definitely go back. I also got a really, really good price by taking Team Aruba's recommendation and going through Player's Choice Tours."

Guy Gemore of Player's Choice Tours strictly sales Aruba vacation packages and has received many vacationers at the recommendation of Team Aruba. Another of Pluchino's crew members, Bill Madden, booked a vaca-

tion through Guy Gemore and ended up buying a time-share in Aruba. For more information on your next vacation email guy@player-schoicetours.com.

The Team Aruba tour continues this weekend for the Hardee's ADRL Georgia Drags, April 13-14 at South Georgia Motorsports Park. The team hopes to build on the success of their first event, where they made it to the semi-finals.

"We have a lot of good things going on this season," said driver Trevor Eman. "Team morale is high. We're excited about the promise of this team. Plus, every time we're at the track is another chance to tell folks about Aruba. I enjoy that as much as going down the track!"

Keep up with Team Aruba at www.facebook.com/teamarubaracing and on Twitter @TeamArubaRacing. Find race results, team updates, videos and photos. Also leave your comments to cheer on Team Aruba!

For more on your Aruba vacation visit www.Aruba.com and www.Destination-Magazines.com.

Aruba's banking sector...

Continued from page 3

AIB still manages a number of projects that were financed with money from the "Fondo Desaroyo Arubano," which fund is currently depleting. This is sufficient reason for AIB to begin focusing on her own function, as well as on the development of a strategic future.

"We have decided to concentrate, more than in the past, on financial services, as well on operational international businesses. We are very good at this," according to Giel.

He indicated that AIB is investing money in Aruba as well as in Latin America.

Companies desiring to invest money in Aruba can approach AIB. This applies to companies in Europe wishing to establish here or in Latin America. They can offer them the required advice and counsel.

The bank enjoys excellent international relations with contacts at renowned companies such as Goldman Sachs, which coincidentally has given the bank high name in the international financial world. Aruba complies with all laws and international regulations and norms. This ensures that all investments are secure at AIB and in Aruba.



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David and Lori Brickley honored as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba



Recently, the Aruba Tourism Authority honored Mr. David and Mrs. Lori Brickley from Woodbridge Virginia, USA, as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The honorees are loyal Costa Linda Beach Resort guests. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10 or more consecutive years. David and Lori said that they will keep on visiting Aruba because it is the best place for vacation they have ever been to. The certificate was presented to them by Mr. Ernest Giel, representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, together with Gloria Janga and Miriam Rodriguez of the Costa Linda Beach resort.



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International news

Obama urges N. Korea to end 'belligerent approach'

WASHINGTON (AFP) - US President Barack Obama yesterday called on North Korea to end its "belligerent approach," as the world waited for Pyongyang to carry out an expected missile launch.

Obama, who spoke alongside UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon after talks in the Oval Office, said "nobody wants to see a conflict" with the North, but that the United States is ready to take necessary measures to defend itself.

"We both agree that now is the time for North Korea to end the kind of belligerent approach that they've been taking," Obama said. "It's important for North Korea, like every other country in the world, to observe basic rules and norms."

While the US president emphasized that Washington would "continue to try to work

to resolve some of those issues diplomatically," he made it clear that the United States would be ready to face any eventuality and defend its allies.

"The United States will take all necessary steps to protect its people and meet our obligations under our alliances in the region," Obama said.

Earlier yesterday, Group of Eight foreign ministers including US Secretary of State John Kerry strongly condemned Pyongyang over its nuclear program, warning it would face further sanctions in the event of a missile launch.

North Korea has threatened to launch nuclear strikes against the United States and its allies in northeast Asia in retaliation over UN sanctions imposed over Pyongyang's December rocket launch and February nuclear test.

Agents bust Austin drug operations, arrest 37



HIDALGO, TX-- AFP photo shows a U.S. Border Patrol Agent inspecting a load of marijuana seized from drug smugglers near the U.S.-Mexico border in Hidalgo, Texas, yesterday.

AUSTIN -- Federal agents brought down two drug Mexican drug networks operating in Central Texas. The U.S. Attorney's Office unveiled more than two dozen indictments yesterday. Federal, state and local law enforcement worked together to track and bring down the drug rings. Thirty-seven people are now in custody.

"A large scale organization, very well structured, very well organized, with the shots being called by bosses in Mexico," said Greg Thrash, DEA.

According to the indictments, the defendants are facing a mix of charges, including conspiracy to possess and intent to distribute drugs, including methamphet-

US Senate agrees to debate landmark gun bill

Continued from page 1

The deal waters down the universal background check system sought by Obama, which was opposed by scores of lawmakers including some Democrats -- like Manchin of West Virginia -- who hail from conservative-leaning, pro-gun states.

But it strengthens existing legislation, which only requires background checks for firearm purchases at licensed gun dealers, to require checks for sales at gun shows and on the Internet. It would still allow gun sales between relatives and friends to continue without such checks, however.

The big question now is whether the legislation, in parts or as a whole, can pass the Senate and head to the House, where an even tougher vote is expected.

Republican Mark Kirk of Illinois, where the main city Chicago is awash in gun violence, helped craft the compromise and is likely on board. And another moderate in the party, Susan Collins, has expressed her initial support, although she said she wanted to look closely at the bill's language.

But in a sign of the issue's political dynamite, two Democrats up for re-election in 2014 in pro-gun states, Mark Pryor of Arkansas and Mark Begich of



Alaska, voted against proceeding to debate on the bill.

Reid pledged to allow any senator to come forward with amendments to improve the broader bill, which is seen as the country's most significant gun legislation since a 1994 federal crime bill.

And he told his colleagues to prepare for a series of tight votes in the week ahead, including on contentious amendments like a proposed assault weapons ban, which is supported by the White House but is widely seen as unlikely to pass Congress.

"Make no mistake about it -

- we have a tough fight," acknowledged Senator Chuck Schumer.

But Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, the state hit by last December's massacre, said he has been awed by what he called the "seismic" political shift that has swept the country in the wake of Newtown.

"Four months ago people thought nothing would ever be done," he said. "Today, we prove that conventional wisdom wrong."

Two congressmen, Republican Peter King and Democrat Mike Thompson, plan to introduce similar background check legislation in the House of Representatives and have called on that chamber's Republican leadership to bring it to a vote. "The American people are getting a vote in the Senate," Thompson said. "They deserve one in the House."

Cuba faces vast land losses as sea levels rise

HAVANA (AFP) - Cuba risks losing a vast stretch of beach front homes and pristine coastal habitat by 2050, because of rapidly rising sea levels, a top environmental official warned yesterday.

At a panel discussion on Cuban environmental policy, Tomas Escobar, director of the island's National Environment Agency, said rising oceans could submerge huge areas of the Caribbean island, with potentially devastating consequences.

The changes "could affect ecosystems, increase the vulnerability of coastal settlements, reduce agricultural soil productivity, crops and forestry and reduce the quality and availability of water," the Prensa Latina news agency quoted Escobar as saying.

"At the current rate of increase in sea level, by 2050 we will have lost nearly 2,700 square kilometers of land area and 9,000 homes," he said.

Cuba has an area of 109,884 square kilometers (42,426 square miles), and more than 5,700 kilometers (3,500 miles) of coastline that includes everything from steep cliffs to sandy beaches to swamps.

Escobar said President Raul Castro's government had established a policy to try and mitigate the effects of rising sea levels, centered on "the goal of reducing vulnerabilities identified in disaster prevention studies."

Policy priorities include the conservation and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems, including the island's coral reefs, mangroves and beaches.



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International News

'Emergency' in Brazil state after flood of foreign migrants

BRASILIA (AFP) - Brazil's northwestern state of Acre declared a "social emergency" as it attempts to slow a wave of undocumented immigrants smuggled overland from neighboring countries.

One of Brazil's smaller states, Acre borders the states of Amazonas to the north and Rondonia to the east. To its southeast is Bolivia, while Peru is on its south and west.

Nilson Moura, Acre's secretary for justice and human rights said the new arrivals have come from some of the poorest corners of the world, including Haiti and Bangladesh. Others have come from Senegal, the Dominican Republic, Nigeria and elsewhere, he said.

Justice Minister Jose Eduardo Cardozo said the Haitians' status would be adjusted so that they can work in Brazil. But the fate of the other immigrants was not immedi-

ately clear.

The Amazon rainforest state "has been turned into an international travel route controlled by coyotes," said Moura, referring to the smugglers who -- often in exchange for exorbitant fees -- guide the undocumented foreign migrants into Brazil.

Officials said the migrants began as a trickle in December 2010 and quickly numbered 4,300 Haitians. Authorities in Acre said they now have detained some 1,300 immigrants at a facility in the town of Brasileia built to hold 200.

"We have shortages of space and water, and illness," Moura said, adding that he feared that the miserable conditions could lead to an epidemic of even more serious disease.

Officials here said that they issued the emergency decree in hopes of procuring assistance from Brazil's federal authorities.

Focus on cyber-bullying after 2nd Canadian teen kills self

OTTAWA (AFP) - Another Canadian teen's suicide after months of harassment and circulation of an image of her alleged rape by four boys has reignited concerns over cyber-bullying, and led hacker group Anonymous Thursday to call for a new investigation.

Rehtaeh Parsons, 17, died in hospital on Sunday in the port city of Halifax in easternmost Canada after a suicide attempt that her mother blames on the alleged November 2011 sexual assault and a subsequent barrage of taunts by schoolmates calling her a "slut."

Parsons was said to have been passed out drunk at a party when she was raped. One of the suspects later posted a photo of the incident online.

Police investigated but no charges were made. Parsons meanwhile moved cities and schools, but the harassment persisted.

"She was never left alone. Her friends turned against her,

people harassed her, boys she didn't know started texting her and Facebooking asking her to have sex with them since she had had sex with their friends. It just never stopped," her mother Leah Parsons told public broadcaster CBC.

The tragedy prompted another bereaved mother whose daughter, Amanda Todd, also committed suicide last year after being tormented by an anonymous cyberbully to reach out to the Parsons family.

Anonymous issued a statement saying it would reveal the identity of the four boys accused in the affair if police did not reopen their investigation into the alleged rape, harassment and suicide of Parsons.

"What we have learned is certainly appalling, but it wasn't the act of rape that shocked us. It was the behavior of the adults in Rehtaeh's life that we found most disturbing," the hacker group said.

"This wasn't (a case of) 'he

said, she said.' He (one of the suspects) said he did it and he said it to everyone while showing them a photo of him doing it," the group said, critical of police for not laying charges.

The girl's father Glen Canning echoed the public's frustrations. "My daughter wasn't bullied to death, she was disappointed to death. Disappointment in the people she thought she could trust, her school and the police," he said.

Amanda Todd's death in October under similar circumstances had sparked a national debate on what is appropriate online behavior, and calls for criminalizing cyber-bullying.

In a YouTube video watched by millions worldwide, Todd said she "cried every night" after a photo of her breasts, flashed in an online video chat with a stranger a few years earlier, was distributed in her community in Canada's westernmost British Columbia province. "I have nobody. I need someone."

Syria urges UN action against Qaeda rebels

DAMASCUS (AFP) - Syria demanded Thursday that the UN slap sanctions on a jihadist group after it pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda, as the opposition accused regime forces of "savage" killings in the country's south.

The demand by Damascus that the UN class Al-Nusra Front as an Al-Qaeda-linked group came as G8 foreign ministers meeting in London said they were "appalled" at the spiralling violence but made no mention of supplying arms to the rebels.

In a letter to the United Nations, Syria's foreign ministry said it "expects the Security Council to fulfil its role and preserve global security," and class the Al-Nusra Front as an

Al-Qaeda-linked group, state media reported.

A sanctions regime was introduced by the UN to punish individuals and entities linked to Al-Qaeda, freezing assets, banning travel and imposing an embargo on arms destined for the terror network.

The letter followed a pledge by Al-Nusra Front on Wednesday of allegiance to Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri and support for his call for an Islamic state to be created in Syria, raising concerns by Western nations about weapons falling into the wrong hands.

On the battlefield, details emerged of an army assault in which six children were among dozens of people killed -- some summarily executed -- in two

towns of the southern province of Daraa.

With the death toll rising and no end in sight to the violence, the G8 foreign ministers urged greater "humanitarian" assistance for those caught up in a conflict that is now in its third year.

Human Rights Watch, meanwhile, accused the regime of deliberately or indiscriminately killing more than 4,300 civilians since July 2012 in air strikes it said amount to war crimes.

Bakeries and hospitals were among the civilian targets hit by air strikes as the regime resorts to an increasingly indiscriminate use of its air power, said the New York-based group.



WASHINGTON (AFP) - : Black hooded human rights activists hold banners demanding the closing of Guantanamo during a protest, part of the Nationwide for Guantanamo Day of Action, outside the White House in Washington thursday. The Guantanamo jail, in a US Navy base in Cuba, was opened in 2002 to hold prisoners taken in the "War on Terror" waged by then US President George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks.

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Jolie joins world powers to vow action against rape as weapon of war



LONDON (AFP) - World powers pledged new measures and funds on Thursday to tackle rape and sexual violence used as a weapon of war, in a "historic" deal drawn up with UN special envoy Angelina Jolie.

G8 foreign ministers meeting in London agreed to commit \$35.5 million (27 million euros) to tackle what British Foreign Secretary William Hague likened to slavery as "one of the greatest and most persistent injustices in the world".

Under the new declaration, Hague said rape and sexual violence during conflict would constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, putting a responsibility on signatories to actively seek out and

put perpetrators on trial.

"I am delighted to announce that today we have reached a historic agreement as G8 foreign ministers: pledging to work together to end sexual violence in conflict," said Hague.

Hollywood actress Jolie, a United Nations special envoy for refugee issues, praised Hague and said the declaration signed at the Group of Eight ministerial meeting as "long-overdue".

"Rape is not a women's issue, or a humanitarian issue, it is a global issue and it belongs here at the top table of international decision-making where he has put it," she said.

Jolie and Hague visited the Democratic Republic of Congo last month to highlight

the issue, which Britain has made a priority of its chairmanship of the G8 this year.

In one community in DR Congo, 11 babies between the age of six months and a year old were raped last year, UN special representative Zainab Hawa Bangura told the press conference.

Although Hague conceded that the largest numbers of victims were in Africa -- 250,000 women raped in DR Congo over the last decade and hundreds of thousands in the Rwandan genocide -- he said tens of thousands had also been abused during the war in Bosnia.

The declaration committed the G8 to work towards a new protocol setting out how to investigate such crimes, provide new training for their militaries on how to deal with sexual violence and provide support for prosecutions in countries worst affected.

Jolie said those raped had for too long "been the forgotten victims of war: responsible for none of the harm, but bearing the worst of the pain."

"But today, I believe, their voices have been heard, and that we finally have some hope to offer them."



PARIS (AFP) - : Wilfred de Bruijn, a Dutch man living in France for 10 years, poses in Paris yesterday. Wilfred de Bruijn's face is bloated, seeped in blood, his bruised right eye shut tight, his tooth broken -- the victim of a brutal attack in Paris while he was "walking arm in arm" with his boyfriend. His is one of the latest cases of homophobia in France, where activists say reports of verbal and physical assaults on gays have surged amid rabid debate over a bill allowing same-sex marriage, currently being discussed in the Senate.

Death toll hits 10 in China bird flu outbreak

SHANGHAI (AFP) - The death toll from H7N9 bird flu in China reached 10 on Thursday with another victim in Shanghai, as cities banned people from raising chickens at home to try to contain the outbreak.

China has confirmed 38 human cases of H7N9 avian influenza after announcing on March 31 that it had found the strain in people for the first time.

One person, a young boy in Shanghai, has been discharged from hospital after recovering but the city reported the death of a 74-year-old retired man on Thursday.

Chinese authorities say they do not know how the virus is spreading, but it is believed to be crossing to humans from birds.

Experts fear the prospect of such viruses mutating into a form easily transmissible between humans has the potential to trigger a pandemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said earlier this week that there was no evi-

dence of human-to-human transmission.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said Thursday that H7N9 showed "affinity" to humans while being harder to detect in birds, which made finding the source of transmission more difficult.

The prestigious Chinese Academy of Sciences said Wednesday H7N9 had probably originated from migratory birds from East Asia mixing with domestic fowl in China's Yangtze River delta region -- the site of the current outbreak.

Five more markets across eastern China had found H7N9 in samples from chickens and ducks, the Ministry of Agriculture said Wednesday.

Nanjing city had barred urban residents from raising poultry and livestock on their property, asking them to cull their own animals and fining them up to 50 yuan (\$8) for violations, the China Daily newspaper reported on Thursday.

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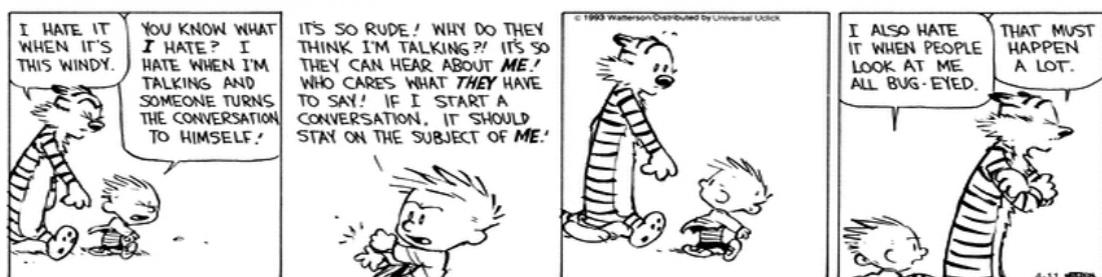
PICKLES



MOMMA



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ACROSS

1. Rescue worker (abbr.)
4. Eye's protector
7. "People ____ Funny"
10. Korean auto company
11. Actor Arnaz
12. Polar transport
13. Antlered animal
14. Years and years
15. Converts hides
16. Yarn bundle
18. It comes before Fri.
20. Behave or print preceder
22. Blows
26. Egyptian structure
30. Walk ____ in my shoes (2 wds.)
31. Doctors' gp.
32. Touch gently
34. Football's Namath
35. Genre for "Star Trek" (hyph.)
38. Meaner
41. Comic Soupy
42. Nipper's co.
43. Issue from
46. Lasso user
50. Fruit peel
53. Juan's house
55. Gone by
56. Actor Gossett et al.
57. Heidi of

"Project Runway"

58. Movie studio
59. Adder's quest
60. Hankering
61. Govt. agcy.

DOWN

1. Makes do
2. Dairy product
3. ____ after (resemble)
4. Zodiac lion
5. Ain't, correctly
6. Platter
7. Ga.'s neighbor
8. Stimp's pal
9. Harris and Asner
11. Levi's fabric
12. Guitarist's verb
17. "____ Loser" (2 wds.)

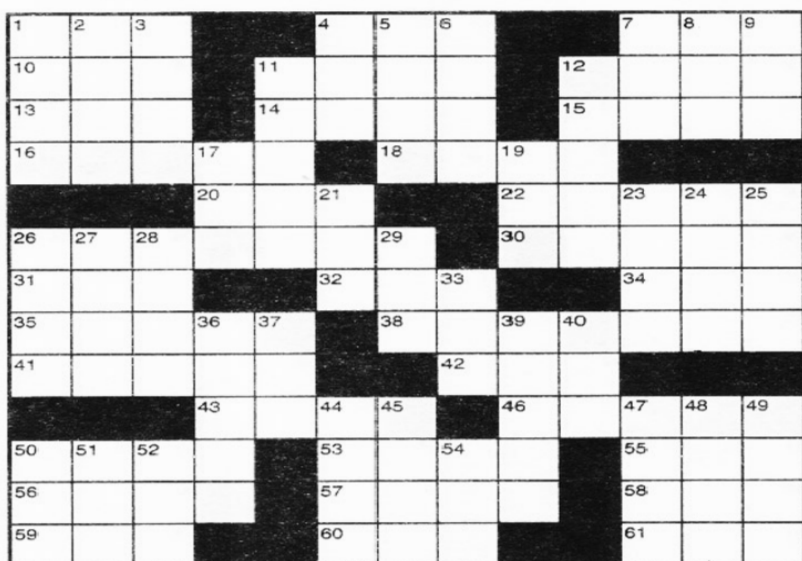
19. "____ Lazy River" (2 wds.)

21. Drink daintily
23. South Pacific island group
24. Floating chunk of ice
25. Palm reader
26. Exceed
27. Local gym (abbr.)
28. Wading bird
29. Blocker of "Bonanza"
33. Roofing material
36. Provides lunch
37. Suffix for a doctrine
39. "Go away!"
40. Truth, in China
44. Repulsive,

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- informally
45. Grimm story
47. Shriver and Dawber
48. Bacon and ____
49. "Arrivederci, ____"
50. Author Stevenson's monogram
51. Promissory note
52. Bk. after Leviticus
54. Celestial body



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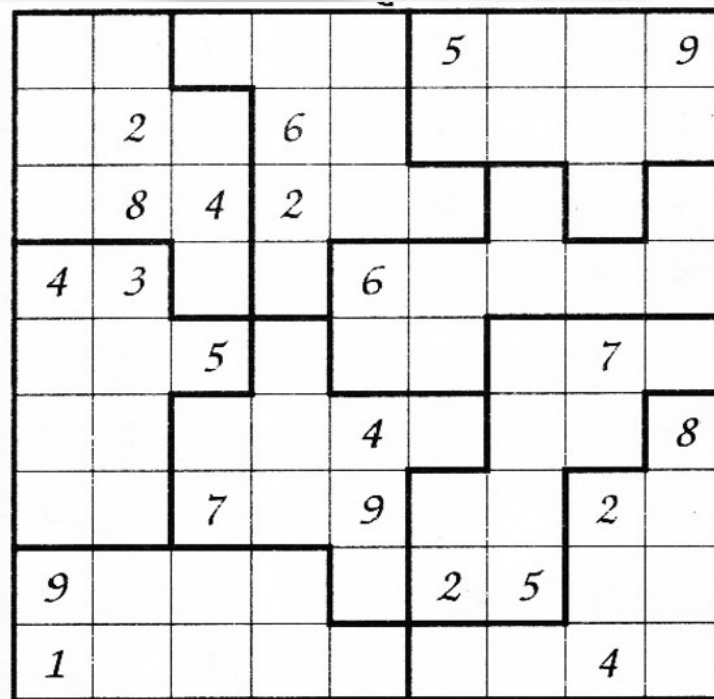
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5	2	7	1	6	3	4	9	8
8	6	5	9	3	7	2	1	4
9	2	8	7	4	1	5	6	3
2	5	4	8	9	6	1	3	7
1	9	6	5	2	7	3	8	4
7	8	1	2	5	9	6	4	3
6	3	2	5	1	7	8	9	4

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

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Finance

Oil prices drop on demand worries, US stocks surge to new record highs

NEW YORK (AFP) - Global oil prices dived Thursday on concerns about weakening global demand after the IEA lowered its 2013 consumption forecast.

New York's main contract, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for May delivery, closed at \$93.51 a barrel, a loss of \$1.13.

In London trade, Brent North Sea crude for delivery in May dropped \$1.52 to settle at \$104.27 a barrel.

"The latest monthly report from the IEA falls in line with reports released in recent days by OPEC and the EIA by showing a marginal downward revision to oil demand growth for this year," said Matt Smith of Schneider Electric.

The International Energy Agency projected global oil demand for oil would grow by 795,000 barrels per day to a total of 90.6 million barrels a day in 2013, slightly lower than its previous outlook, as a decline in Europe partially offset growth elsewhere.

On Wednesday, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) also lowered its forecast.

US oil prices had rallied on Wednesday after the US Energy Information Administration report showed a smaller-than-expected increase in oil stocks in top consumer the United States.

The EIA said US crude reserves grew by 250,000 barrels in the week ending April 5, pushing US commercial stocks to 388.9 million barrels, not far from the all-time record of 391.9 million barrels in July 1990.

Sudden analyst Myrto Sokou said that the oil market was hit this week by "renewed concerns about oil consumption".

And the US stocks pushed to new record levels after a government report pointed to lower-than-expected jobless claims.

At the closing bell, the Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 61.29 (0.41 percent) to 14,863.53, while the broad-based S&P 500 rose 5.47 (0.34 percent) to 1,593.20.

Both the Dow and the S&P 500 recorded new all-time highs for the second day in a row.

The tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index rose 2.90 (0.09 percent) to 3,300.16.

The Labor Department reported that new claims for unemployment benefits came in at 346,000 last week, well below the 365,000 expected by analysts.

US charges ex-KPMG auditor with insider trading

NEW YORK (AFP) - The US Justice Department on Thursday charged a former KPMG senior partner with insider trading with a friend who allegedly made more than \$1 million in illegal proceeds.

Scott London allegedly gave confidential information on clients Herbalife, Skechers and Deckers Outdoor Corporation to his friend, Bryan Shaw, according to the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

London, who oversaw KPMG's audit practice for the Pacific Southwest, allegedly accepted bags of cash and a Rolex watch in exchange for the inside information, the authorities said in a statement.

London, 50, of Agoura Hills, California, has admitted he gave inside information to Shaw.

KPMG said Monday it had fired London after learning of his dealings with Shaw and resigned as auditor for Herbalife and Skechers.

Shaw secretly compensated London with at least \$50,000 in cash, as well as a Rolex watch and other jewelry, meals and tickets, according to the criminal charges.

The US Attorney's complaint against London alleged a single count of conspiracy to commit securities fraud through insider trading.

London faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine if convicted.

The Securities and Exchange Commission also announced it had filed a parallel civil insider-trading charge against London and Shaw.

The cash was "usually delivered in bags" outside Shaw's California jewelry store, the SEC said.

Shaw cooperated with the criminal probe into London's actions. The FBI complaint released a photograph of London accepting cash from Shaw.

Shaw cooperated with the criminal probe into London's actions. The FBI complaint released a photograph of London accepting cash from Shaw.

US sees stronger ebook sales, but growth slows

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Electronic books provided 23 percent of US publishing revenues in 2012 but sizzling growth rates have eased, according to industry figures released Thursday.

The Association of American Publishers said ebooks gained ground in all categories -- adult fiction and nonfiction, young adult and children's and religious publishing -- and helped the industry increase revenues six percent to \$7.1 billion for the year.

The percentage of revenues from ebooks rose to 23 percent of net publisher revenues in 2012, from 17 percent in 2011 and just one percent in 2008, the trade group said.

Growth in ebook sales was 41 percent -- an impressive figure but below the red-hot pace of recent years including 2011, when ebook sales doubled.

For adult fiction and nonfiction, ebooks provided \$1.3 bil-

lion in revenue, a 33 percent gain.

Sales of children's ebooks were up 120 percent in 2012 to \$233 million, driven by huge gains from titles like The Hunger Games.

The association said December data showed slower growth than in the past, suggesting the market is losing momentum.

Adult fiction and non-fiction ebooks showed a gain of 20 percent in December versus the previous year, and sales of children's ebooks fell 21 percent.

"In 2012, ebook revenue growth hit an inflection point -- where it went from reliable triple-digit increases to double-digit increases," the group said in a statement.

"January 2013 could be a month of big increases following a holiday season during which many readers unwrapped new e-readers and tablets."



CHICAGO (AFP) - : Laptop computers are offered for sale at a Tiger Direct store on April 11, 2013 in Chicago, Illinois. According to a recent report, sales of personal computers have been experiencing double-digit declines as consumers look toward tablets and smart phones to fill their computing needs.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer

E	E	L	C	P	A			H	B	O					
A	S	I	R	A	S	H		W	E	E	K				
R	E	S	P	O	N	S	E	A	R	E	A				
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		T	E	E	S		A	V	I	S					
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Tibetans who commit suicide 'not crazy': Dalai Lama



TRENTO (AFP) - The Dalai Lama on Thursday said during a visit to Italy that Tibetans who have committed suicide in recent weeks were "not crazy" but were taking desperate action to escape Chinese "brutality". "Tibetans who have taken their lives to escape the torture and prisons of China are not crazy," the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader told some 3,500 supporters in the city of Trento in northern Italy. The Dalai Lama was in the country to accept a prize for minorities given out by the autonomous province of Bolzano, which is in Italy but where a majority of the population is German-speaking. The Dalai Lama said he had wanted to meet Pope Francis during his visit but had not been able to do so because the newly-elected pontiff was too busy. He said he still hoped to meet him soon. photo shows The Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama (R) joking with the President of province of Trento Alberto Pacher during the press conference

Tutu urges S. Africa to regain 'spirit' of greatness



CAPE TOWN (AFP) - Peace icon Desmond Tutu on Thursday called on South Africa, tarnished by violence and inequality, to recover the "spirit that made it great" at the fall of apartheid.

"The world really thought that we were the cat's whiskers," Tutu, who is seen as South Africa's moral compass, said referring to the period after the advent of democracy in 1994.

"We can't pretend that we have remained at the same height," he added with "a plea that we for goodness sake recover the spirit that made us great".

The former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town was speaking at an event to mark

his reception of the \$1.7 million (1.3 million euro) Templeton Prize award.

The 81-year-old steered clear of directly commenting on current politics amid a series of controversies facing President Jacob Zuma's government.

The Nobel peace laureate said South Africa, once "the flavour of the month" when democracy arrived 19 years ago, was now one of the world's most violent and unequal societies.

"The world was thrilled when freedom came to our land and we pray that South Africa will recover its own sense of worth, we will recover the sense of worth of every single human being," he

said.

He called on the nation to become "a generous, a gentle, a caring, a compassionate society."

Tutu was awarded the Templeton Prize, one of the world's largest annual awards, last week for his lifelong work to promote "love and forgiveness".

The prize pays tribute to "a living person who has made exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension".

Psy back in saddle with new single 'Gentleman'

SEOUL (AFP) - "Gangnam Style" star Psy Friday unveiled the highly-anticipated follow-up to his global hit with another catchy dance tune infused with his signature self-mocking humour.

Even Kim Jong-Un's threats of nuclear war couldn't divert world attention from the main event on the Korean peninsula this week as "Gentleman" hit online music stores in a midnight rolling release across 119 nations.

With fans and critics waiting to see whether the "Gangnam Style" star and his invisible horse-riding dance are more than just a one-hit wonder, the new electro-dance song offers an equally simple and catchy melody mixed with repetitive and highly rhythmic lyrics.

The song -- a satire of a self-proclaimed "gentleman" trying to woo women at a party -- contains more English lyrics than "Gangnam Style" in an apparent effort to appeal to the singer's newfound global fans.

The crucial music video has not been released yet and is expected to be unveiled around a promotional concert in Seoul on Saturday featuring the new song and accompanying dance routines.

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5 Burgers Aruba: Now your best breakfast bargain!



--A favorite stop for a great burger for lunch or dinner has just expanded their hours and menu to offer some of the best breakfast bargains to be found in Palm Beach. Owners Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. The couple's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what they really want has resulted in a unique menu from an inter-

nationally known franchise with a "5", which now includes breakfast.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," believes Aaron. Upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers-the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy,

made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

However, beginning at 7 a.m., patrons can now order 2 eggs any style, (omelets with 3 fillings are \$7.99) toast and coffee with unlimited refills for the special introductory price of only \$4.49, (\$5.48, with bacon) or All-you-can-eat pancakes, for \$6.99, again, with free refills on fresh coffee. Breakfast is served until 11 a.m. Famous for their fries made from fresh potatoes, Aaron has been working for months on devising the most irresistible home fries recipe, chunky and tender with skins still on; after much testing and tasting, he got the thumbs up from his harshest critic, Rosie; so this is another treat you have to try.

A glance at their burger menu will certainly tempt you to return for lunch or dinner, to sample their famous specialty items such as the Gouda,



Farmer's or Man Burger (almost 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with Aarons' secret-recipe crispy onion rings. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jala-peño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato...whatever, the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of

fries is enough to be shared by two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!"

Try them the English way-with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

5 Burgers is now open early until 10-ish at night; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district at now extra cost for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for either owner to sit and chat, sharing their knowledge of the island while making sure patrons are happy with their meal.

Gold Coast Aruba: This is the time to invest

-- Management of Gold Coast Aruba, the island's newest and most innovative gated community, reports that sales have been very good and encouraging as the global economy recovers and people looking to purchase vacation homes have found that Gold Coast is an outstanding investment value. Director of Sales, Fito Croes has noticed a surprising percentage of owners in reality do not spend a great amount of time personally to use the villas or town homes they purchase, but are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their "home away from home" in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," he remarked, "but I am gratified by how many are buying because they felt secure with real estate investment on Aruba. They really study the history and economy of the island and are impressed with the political stability and continually increasing value of prime locations. Gold Coast is in the heart of Malmok, considered Aruba's most exclusive community where the value of properties has only increased over time. It is only minutes to the best beaches and all the action, and yet offers a quiet and secluded getaway; we are very pleased by



the response to our concept."

Fito, with his sister Mayrin and brother Rudy operate Cas Bon, which has been constructing homes and building developments for all budgets for nearly twenty years. "Gold Coast Aruba is the jewel in our crown," observes Fito. "We were very excited about this project and the scope of actual and planned facilities and amenities. We have spoken to countless island visitors to find out what they would really want in a permanent residence on Aruba, and took from there."

Input from frequent vacationers who have dreamed of their own home in Aruba contributed to the realization of Gold Coast Aruba which when complete will be a community

of 260 town homes, villas and condominiums with a stunning clubhouse complemented by two additional community pool areas. The Clubhouse is about to start construction and will offer to the community homeowners and visitors 2 tennis courts, full service spa and fitness center as well as a stunning pool area and is expected to be complete by early 2013. It will also house a restaurant and mini-market.

Owners who purchased upon the groundbreaking only a few short years ago, are already enjoying a nearly 50% appreciation on their investment, particularly those taking advantage of the on site management's rental services program. There is always a great demand for Aruba and facili-

ties such as those at Gold Coast, make it easy for some owners to see a valuable return on their investment.

The design of the residences and public areas is open, airy and spacious, taking full advantage of the island environment, with quality construction and finishing available. Partnering with two of Aruba's top providers of kitchens and bathrooms enables developers to offer custom options allowing buyers to individualize their homes. An elegant and chic furniture package is available or island designers will assist owners in finishing the décor to their specific tastes.

There are many aspects to purchasing property; not the

least is the future value of the investment. To further enhance this, Gold Coast management have inaugurated a number of in-house services and have recently become affiliated Interval International, the world's largest network of vacation ownership properties which provides an unlimited international pool of investors to tap for ownership and rental prospects. Property exchange for a vacation in another destination is also available through the Interval International affiliation. Gold Coast's own rental services have also proven highly successful in assisting owners in renting their villas; 24-hour security and maintenance services also tip the scales when it is time to make a decision. Aside from all this, housekeeping, child care, catering services, car rental through its partnership with AVIS car rental are also available as well as pre-shopping services so cupboards and refrigerators are stocked upon arrival, which can also be arranged through their property management department. Personnel are also available to assist in arranging restaurant reservations and island activities.

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Golf: Smooth start for Woods at Masters

(AFP) - Tiger Woods opened his 19th Masters campaign with a confident two-under 70 on Thursday as he sought to crown a remarkable return to the top with a long-overdue 15th major title.

The 37-year-old American, who regained the world number one spot last month after a two-and-a-half-year hiatus, got off to a quiet enough start, but was two under by the turn with birdies at six and eight.

Watched by the new love in his life, reigning Winter Olympic downhill champion skier Lindsey Vonn, the 14-time major winner stayed there until the par-five 13th, where he moved to three-under.

A bogey at the bunkerless 14th hole set him back, but he parred his way in from there to tuck himself nicely in behind the leaders.

The early playing conditions in the 77th edition of the year's first major were benign, with



little wind, and that led to some fireworks from the early starters.

None sparkled more than cricket-loving Australian Marc Leishman, who pounded out four birdies in a row from the 13th to come in with a superb six-under 66.

US veteran Jim Furyk and 2007 Masters winner Zach Johnson both came in with 69s, with a jam of players on 70 alongside Woods including English challengers Lee Westwood and Justin Rose, Americans Kevin Na, David Toms,

Brandt Snedeker and John Huh and KJ Choi of South Korea.

But it was Woods that was one again the full focus of attention as a win on Sunday would crown his return to the top after three years of turmoil and doubt in his personal and professional life.

It would also leave him just three majors short of achieving his life-long ambition of matching, and eventually surpassing, Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 major titles, the last of which came here in 1986 at the age of 46.



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South Africa's Pistorius hits out at disrespectful 'fans'



JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - Paralympian Oscar Pistorius said he was "deeply disturbed" Thursday by the comments of some of his fans on social media directed at Reeva Steenkamp, the girlfriend he is accused of killing.

In a family statement, Pistorius expressed concern at the "disregard that is being shown by some - specifically those commenting via social media - for the profound pain that Reeva's family and friends are going through."

Pistorius was said to be furious when told about a group of fans on Twitter calling themselves the "Pistorians," and ordered a statement to be released condemning them, spokesperson Anneliese Burgess told AFP.

The group, which recently appeared on the front page of South Africa's Heat magazine, have virulently backed Pistorius's claim he shot Steenkamp on Valentine's Day after mistaking her for a burglar.

Some of the group have also criticised Steenkamp's family and the 29-year-old model's behaviour.

"Oscar was very very upset, he is not following media coverage or social media, but when he was told about it he was very upset," said Burgess.

"There is not a moment in the day that Oscar does not mourn for his girlfriend and Reeva's family, and all those who were close to her, are in his thoughts constantly," the statement said.

The statement also revealed

that Pistorius has been spending time with people close to Steenkamp.

Pistorius faces a trial later this year on charges of premeditated murder.

He claims he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder when he shot her several times through a locked bathroom door in the early hours of February 14.

He returns to court on June 4.

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Golf: Masters first-round scores - 4th update

AUGUSTA (AFP) - Scores on Thursday during the first round of the 77th Masters at par-72 Augusta National:-

66 - Marc Leishman (AUS)
68 - David Lynn (ENG), Rickie Fowler (USA), Gonzalo Fernandez-Castano (ESP), Trevor Immelman (RSA)
69 - Jim Furyk (USA), Zach Johnson (USA)
70 - Kevin Na (USA), David Toms (USA), Tim Clark (RSA), Lee Westwood (ENG), Brandt Snedeker (USA), Justin Rose (ENG), KJ Choi (KOR), John Huh (USA), Tiger Woods (USA), Jason Day (AUS)
71 - John Peterson (USA), Ryan Moore (USA), Ryo

Ishikawa (JPN), Charl Schwartzel (RSA), Luke Donald (ENG), Ernie Els (RSA), Bernhard Langer (GER)
72 - Russell Henley (USA), Brian Gay (USA), Mike Weir (CAN), Peter Hanson (SWE), John Senden (AUS), DA Points (USA)
73 - Sandy Lyle (SCO), Larry Mize (USA), Richard Sterne (RSA), Webb Simpson (USA), Graeme McDowell (NIR), Michael Thompson (USA), Thomas Bjorn (DEN), Steve Stricker (USA), Guan Tianlang (CHN)
74 - Jose Maria Olazabal (ESP), Nicolas Colsearts (BEL), John Merrick (USA), Mark O'Meara (USA), Jamie Donaldson (WAL), Lucas Glover (USA)
75 - Stewart Cink (USA), Bubba Watson (USA), Scott Piercy (USA), George Coetzee (RSA), Matteo Manassero (ITA), Henrik Stenson (SWE)
76 - Ted Potter (USA), Kevin Streelman (USA), Robert Garrigus (USA), Carl Pettersson (SWE), TJ Vogel (USA), Ian Poulter (ENG), Steven Fox (USA), Ben Curtis (USA), Martin Laird (SCO), Paul Lawrie (SCO)
77 - Nathan Smith (USA)
78 - Padraig Harrington (IRL), Thorbjorn Olesen (DEN), Michael Weaver (USA), Nick Watney (USA)

Tennis: Ferrer out of Monte Carlo Masters

PARIS (AFP) - World number four David Ferrer withdrew from next week's Monte Carlo Masters on Thursday, citing unspecified physical problems.

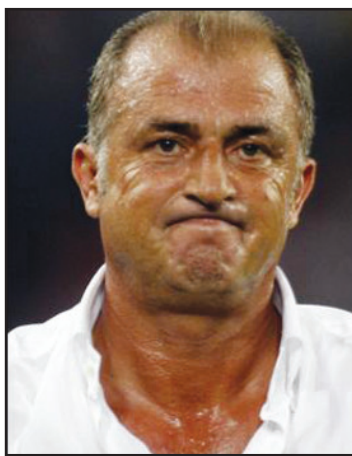
The Spaniard said on his Twitter account that he hoped to return to action at the Barcelona claycourt tournament which starts on April 22. "Unfortunately I cannot be in Monte Carlo for physical problems. I hope to be fit to play at Barcelona," said Ferrer.

The Monte Carlo Masters, the first significant claycourt build-up tournament to the French Open, starts on Sunday.

Rafael Nadal will be seeking a ninth straight title in the principality but faces tough competition from the world's top two players, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

World numbers three and four, Roger Federer and David Ferrer, are not playing in Monaco

Football: Galatasaray coach banned for nine matches



STANBUL (AFP) - Galatasaray coach Fatih Terim was banned for nine matches on Thursday for criticising the referee during a league game against Mersin

Idmanyurdu.

Turkey's Football Federation (TFF) said Terim was guilty of insulting the referee and "unsporting behaviour" during the game while his two assistants received one- and two-game suspensions.

The severe sanction means Terim will be barred from six games in the current season and three in the next.

Terim was banished to the stands with a number of his coaching staff during Saturday's game, which Galatasaray won 3-1.

The manager, visibly angry, at one point went on to the pitch, slammed the match ball on the ground to show his anger about a string of decisions.

Newspapers Hurriyet and Vatan, quoting the official match report, said Terim insulted the referee and a TFF representative.

NBA: Stars rest as Heat clinch playoff home-court edge

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Defending NBA champion Miami, playing without its top stars, clinched this season's best NBA record and a home-field advantage in the playoffs with a 103-98 victory Wednesday at Washington.

Ray Allen scored 23 points to lead the Heat, who lacked LeBron James due to a sore right hamstring, Dwyane Wade with a knee bruise and ankle sprain, Chris Bosh with the flu and Udonis Haslem with a sore right ankle.

The Heat set a new team record for victories in a single season with 62 and ensured they will finish atop the San Antonio Spurs, the leaders of the NBA Western Conference, for the top playoff seed.

At 62-16, Miami had already clinched the top Eastern Conference mark.

Rashard Lewis scored 17 points for the Heat, while Shane Battier added 15 points and Mike Miller had 14 points and eight rebounds for Miami.

The Wizards, led by A.J. Price's 23 points and 17 from John Wall, saw their nine-game home win streak snapped. Washington fell to 29-50.

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Football: Chelsea into Europa League semi-finals



Rubin's defender Cristian Ansaldi (R) fights for the ball with Chelsea's forward Fernando Torres

PARIS (AFP) - Chelsea became the first club to qualify for the semi-finals of this season's Europa League on Thursday despite losing 3-2 to Rubin Kazan in the second leg of their quarter-final tie.

The London club go through 5-4 on aggregate after winning 3-1 in last week's first leg and remain on course to win the Europa League a year after triumphing in the Champions League.

Thursday's match was played on the artificial surface at the Luzhniki stadium in Moscow, 800 kilometres west of Rubin's home in Tatarstan,

because UEFA ruled the Russian club's own pitch to be in unfit condition.

Chelsea fans will forever associate the Luzhniki with their team's painful penalty shoot-out defeat to Manchester United in the 2008 Champions League final, although this occasion had a very different feel to it, with the 80,000-capacity venue barely a quarter full.

The Premier League side got off to a glorious start, taking the lead in the fourth minute when Fernando Torres -- who netted a brace in the first leg -- lobbing into an

empty net as Rubin 'keeper Sergei Ryzhikov came racing out of his area.

Rubin were given hope when Spanish defender Ivan Marciano headed in a cross from compatriot Pablo Orbaiz six minutes into the second half, but Victor Moses soon restored Chelsea's lead on the night, playing a one-two with Ramires and then curling a shot into the net from 15 yards.

That goal left the Russians needing to score four times without reply to rescue the tie.

Captain Gokdeniz Karadeniz did pull one back before Bebras Natcho converted a penalty after Cesar Azpilicueta was harshly penalised for a foul on Aleksandr Ryazantsev in the box.

That allowed Rubin to win the game on the night, but Chelsea interim manager Rafael Benitez was pleased to be in the semi-final draw.

"The scoreline doesn't matter too much. We did a professional job and I am really pleased with the players," he told ESPN television.

"Playing on this pitch and in that atmosphere was not easy, but the main thing for us was to do job."

Two consortiums vying to operate Maracana complex

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) - Two consortiums are competing for the 35-year operation of Rio's iconic Maracana stadium, the venue for the final of the 2014 World Cup, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2016 summer Olympics, officials said Thursday.

Maracana S.A and the Rio Sporting and Cultural Complex Consortium can take part in the bidding, at a date which has yet to be fixed, a state government spokesman told AFP.

Maracana S.A. is made up of Brazilian firms Odebrecht Participacoes, IMX Venues e Arenas owned by Brazilian billionaire Eike Batista and AEG Administracao de Estádios do Brasil Ltda.

Rio Sporting and Cultral Complex Consortium groups Brazilian OAS S/A, Dutch Stadion Amsterdam N.V. and French Lagardere Unlimited.

A total of 21 companies had taken part in technical visits of the stadium but only the two consortiums put in bids, the spokesman said.

The winner must invest \$300 million to upgrade the area around the arena and pay the state government \$2.25 million per year over 35 years.

But it can be guaranteed net profits of \$715 million over 35 years, according to a study made for the bidding process.

The renovation will convert Maracana into a multi-purpose arena featuring bars, restaurants and shops. It also involves the demolition of a former indigenous museum and some athletic facilities near the arena.

Since 2007, the Rio state government has invested \$615 million in Maracana, one of the world's great soccer arenas.

Built for the 1950 World Cup, it is undergoing extensive renovation at a cost of 430 million dollars to host four Confederations Cup matches in June as well as seven World Cup games next year, including the finals of both tournaments.

It was at Maracana that

Brazil lost the 1950 World Cup to Uruguay before a stunned capacity crowd of 200,000.

When the temple of Brazilian football is fully upgraded, it will have a capacity of 83,000, making it the largest in Brazil and South America.

It is to be delivered to world's governing body FIFA on April 27, the last of the six host stadiums being readied for the Confederations Cup which takes place in June.

Thursday's bidding took place only hours after a local court rejected an appeal filed late Wednesday to block the process.

Court President Leila Mariano "rejected an appeal which had suspended the tender process for the rights to operate the Maracana complex," authorities said.

The plan to privatize the Maracana complex and its surroundings has raised the ire of residents and indigenous people who were displaced in March from a historic area building where they have lived since 2006.



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